

Training Examples

These real-world examples are provided for use as a training tool and are composed of actual summaries of selected forklift fatalities investigated by NCDOL. It is hoped that the lessons learned by reviewing the details of these accidents will help prevent future forklift fatalities.

Selected Fatalities Investigated by the N.C. Department of Labor

- *Forklift tipover:* While an employee was operating a forklift, the forklift tipped over while the operator was apparently making a sharp turn at excessive speed. No seat belt was installed. When employee fell from the seat, he was crushed by the rollover bar.
- *Fall from platform on forklift:* The victim (employee #1) was found pinned between the mast and the frame of the forklift. Prior to the accident, employee #1 was raised approximately 6 feet high by the forklift operator while the employee was standing on a pallet that was not secured to the frame of the forklift. The operator left the forklift unattended while the employee was on the pallet pouring spice into a mixing tank.
- *Crushed by forklift:* Victim was driving a stand-up forklift into a tractor trailer to start unloading when the truck driver pulled away from the dock. The forklift fell back onto the forklift driver, striking his head and apparently breaking his neck.
- *Struck by forklift:* The employee was given instructions to take the forklift to unload a truck. The employee picked up the forklift located on the premises less than one-half mile from where the accident occurred. Traveling down an incline, the employee attempted to make a left turn into a parking lot, struck a pothole in the road, and the forklift began to tip over to the right. The employee attempted to jump clear of the forklift, but was struck and killed as the forklift fell.
- *Struck by forklift:* The victim was assigned as the scrap dumpster forklift operator and was in route to a dumpster located in the remote southeast section of the outside material storage area. The victim was utilizing a forklift rated at 4,500 pounds. A metal dump hopper, equipped with a manual dump release handle, was attached to the forks of the forklift. The hopper was filled with scrap shingles. The victim positioned the load above the north side of the dumpster. He dismounted from the right side of the forklift, closest to the north wall of the dumpster, and tripped over the dump handle of the hopper. Before he dismounted, he failed to set the parking brake. As the load suddenly dropped, apparently the forklift jerked, causing the transmission, low on fluid, to slip into drive, and the right rear side of the forklift to travel toward the dumpster, pinning the victim against north wall of the dumpster. A crushing chest injury resulted. The primary cause of the accident was that the employee failed to set the parking brake before dismounting the powered forklift.
- *Struck by load toppling from forklift:* A longshoreman was crushed when he was struck by a toppling load of fiberboard. This cargo had just been off-loaded from a ship and was on the dock awaiting transfer by forklift to an adjacent warehouse. The forklift operator intended to pick up a stack of three crates. The width of the crates had changed from previous loads to more narrow gauges. The forklift operator did not realize he was dealing with a more narrow cargo, which allowed his forks to extend beyond the intended cargo's base. The forks extended some 10 inches under the base of an adjacent stack of three crates, which was some 31 inches wide. When the operator raised his forks he not only picked up his intended load, but also caused the adjacent stack of crates to topple onto the nearby longshoreman.
- *Fall from forks:* Two employees were riding the load, which was tied onto the forks of a forklift. The load was being lifted additionally with the aid of a crane. The men were standing on the load, as it was lifted about 23 feet in the air, above packed dirt. The load shifted and slipped off the forks, propelling the two men off the load. One man was seriously injured, and the other died of his injuries.